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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EPET](#) [GB](#) [EK](#)
SUBJECT: SECRET EG-GABON BOUNDARY MEDIATION FAILS

Classified By: CDA Katherine Dhanani. Reason: 1.4 (b) & (d).

¶1. (C) According to MFA Legal Advisor Michel Biang, the draft schedule for EG President Obiang's September 8 visit to Libreville included the surprise signing of a maritime boundary agreement. Biang said the deal, which he did not see until a short time before Obiang's arrival, gave EG most of the waters in the Igoumou block that Gabon had granted to Shell, and gave Gabon Mbanie Island. Biang was told that both Presidents had blessed the deal. After Obiang's arrival, however, the EG team retired from the meeting room for an hour and returned insisting that the boundary be moved so that EG would have sovereignty over Mbanie. This led to a collapse of the agreement and heated exchanges.

¶2. (C) Biang said the draft agreement was the product of a secret mediation carried out over the last few months by a

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Cameroonian attorney acquainted with both the Gabonese and Equato-Guinean Chiefs of State. Biang reported that, while Minister of Foreign Affairs Ping and President of the Constitutional Court Mborantsuo were aware of the initiative, they and other members of the Gabonese experts' team involved in the UN mediation played no role in negotiations. Instead, Minister of Interior Mba Obame managed the effort for the GoG. Biang first learned about it in late August when he was told to go to the Intercontinental Hotel to meet and answer the questions of a young woman (he did not know her name). She (the Cameroonian mediator) asked him about different possible boundary locations.

¶3. (C) Biang told Charge that this initiative now appears to be dead. There will be a new effort to resolve the dispute through UN mediation in Geneva, with experts called to meet on October 1 and 2 and Chiefs of State scheduled to meet with UNSG Annan on October 3 and 4. Biang, however, holds out little hope for what he considers a discredited UN process. He believes the failure of the secret deal has now convinced even President Bongo that the dispute will ultimately have to go to the International Court of Justice.

DHANANI